DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 360 773 EC 302 345

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TITLE America 2000 and Special Education: Can the Two Be Merged?
PUB DATE 9 Apr 93
NOTE 40p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children (71st, San Antonio, TX, April 5-9, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accountability; Curriculum Development; *Disabilities; *Educational Change; *Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Force Field Analysis; Futures (of Society); Goal Orientation; *Regular and Special Education Relationship; *Special Education; Systems Approach
IDENTIFIERS *America 2000; *National Education Goals 1990

ABSTRACT

This paper uses systems theory and force field analysis to evaluate the potential for combining special education with America 2000 national educational strategy and goals. A brief history of educational reform attempts is followed by an explanation of systems theory and the school as a social system. Force field analysis is used as a tool for identifying the major internal and external forces impacting change efforts proposed by America 2000. An overview of the major components of America 2000 and evaluation procedures highlights issues of concern and implications for special needs populations. Suggestions include the incorporation of an inclusion model, supported by collaborative efforts between regular and special education; outcomes-based curriculum and unbiased accountability measures; experiential, technological, and multicultural curriculum components; and choice of academic and/or vocational preparation and training. A similar overview format is followed in the representation of each of the six national goals. An exhortation for special education professionals to communicate concerns related to America 2000 and special populations is given, emphasizing the expediency of such efforts. (Contains 52 references.) (Author/DB)

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ED 360 773

America 2000 and Special Education: Can the Two Be Merged?

Paper Presented to:
Council for Exceptional Children
San Antonio, Texas
April 9, 1993

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Running Head: AMERICA 2000 AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

The potential for combining Special Education with the America 2000 national educational strategy is addressed. A brief history of educational reform attempts is followed by an explanation of systems theory and the school as a social system. Force field analysis is used as a tool for promoting an awareness of the major internal and external forces impacting change efforts proposed by America 2000. A condensed overview of the major components of America 2000 and evaluation procedures highlights the issues of concern and implications for special needs populations. Suggestions include the incorporation of an inclusion model, supported by collaborative efforts between regular and special education; outcomes-based curriculum and unbiased accountabilitiy measures; experiential, technological, and multicultural curriculum components; and choice of academic and/or vocational preparation and training. A similar overview format is followed in the presentation of each of the six national goals. An exhortation for special education professionals to communicate concerns related to America 2000 and special populations is given, emphasizing the expediency of such efforts.

Introduction

America 2000 is a national education strategy that was announced by former President Bush on April 18, 1991. It purportedly is a long-range plan, designed to propel every American community toward a common vision, framed by common sense and values. The strategy seeks to advance a set of national goals for education, based on the assumption that the U. S. needs new standards for educated citizens and new values that embrace the ideal for learning and education. Ever since its unveiling, public officials, lawmakers, and educational organizations have been debating issues inherent and promulgated by the strategy.

This paper will present an overview of America 2000, with a conceptual framework for understanding. Potential positive effects and weaknesses regarding its achievement will be presented throughout the paper. Specific implications regarding service delivery to individuals with disabilities and other diverse populations will be developed. Recommendations for implementation are provided as viable alternatives for ensuring the success of America 2000 in reaching its goal for a "Nation of Students".

Background

Cuban (1990) emphasizes the need to examine the history of the federal and state government's role and interest in public education in order to understand those forces impacting educational policy and reform. Each layer of history creates varying interpretations on the part of reform-minded policy makers, researchers, and practitioners, and results in multiple frameworks from which solutions and suggested action evolves.

Historically, the federal government's role in education has been to provide direction, appropriate funds, and allow the states to carry out the programs designed to

achieve the specific goals. Federal involvement increased in the 1960's due to the emphasis of the civil rights movement. Federal funding to the states reached its peak in the 1970's with a prolific number of programs aimed at minorities, the disabled, the disadvantaged, and other populations. However, when President Reagan took office, federal funding diminished and states were given more responsibility. In the 1980's states fervently enacted education reforms, led by governors and state legislatures (Cuban, 1990).

The impetus for reform was further fueled by external factors impacting the need to improve education. Businesses were disillusioned with the student products they were receiving. A Nation at Risk specified recommendations of higher standards for high school graduates, including stricter graduation requirements, a longer school day and school year, and teacher-tests for certification to "teacher-proof" the curriculum (Hill, 1990). Thus, A Nation at Risk brought national attention to the need for educational reform. Closely following in the footsteps of A Nation at Risk were three major reports: Boyer's High School (1983), Sizer's Horace's Compromise (1984), and Goodlad's A Place Called School (1984). Each of these books supported the need for radical restructuring within schools. They criticized the bureaucratic, top-down approach of organizing schools, advocating teacher empowerment. Interestingly, Pugach and Sapon-Shevin (1987) note that "none of these reports addresses special education in any detail" (p.295). Sections of each report, however, "have direct implications for special education...both in terms of the delivery of special education services to students and the content of preservice training for teachers of mildly handicapped students" (Pugach & Sapon-Shevin, 1987, pp. 295, 296).

The National Coalition of Advocates for Students' 1985 report, Barriers to Excellence: Our Children at Risk, coined the term "at-risk" for poor, nonwhite, disabled, or female students who were not expected to be able to meet the new standards. To meet

the needs of these students, these reports and books suggested numerous activities and practices as solutions: professionalizing teachers; recognizing the needs of "at-risk" students; mainstreaming of disabled students; raising standards for advancement and graduation; early intervention through prenatal and post-natal care; increased parental involvement in the schools; teacher autonomy at the worksite; and dropout prevention programs with basic work-skills training (Hill, 1990).

Threaded throughout the history of American education has been the public belief that American schools possess the necessary credentials for solving the nation's social, political, and economic ills. When the governors and President Bush met to determine the nation's educational goals in February, 1990, their interest was to reverse the deteriorating state of the United States in the global economy. According to Cuban (1990), "The meeting was just the most recent demonstration of a durable faith in the power of public schooling to resolve national problems" (p. 268). Howe (1992) argued, however, that the origins of the plans for America 2000 were not made public. He interpreted President Bush's reform effort as a motivated attempt to back up his self-proclaimed title as "Education President". Writers were appointed the task of drafting polished rhetoric concerning those issues that would elicit respect for its organizational format, and emotion for its ability to evoke a national hope in schools as a cure-all mechanism. On the other hand, Bierlein (1993) notes that the six goals are important because they represent the first time that the nation has attempted to develop a written set of educational goals that can be used to measure educational progress.

America 2000 visualizes its strategy as four trains on four parallel tracks: today's students, tomorrow's students, the post-school work force, and families/communities. Clearly, America 2000 is an attempt to provide a framework, a sense of direction, and a purpose for future state and local reform efforts that are committed to "a better future for

America's youth" (Halperin, 1991). However, many questions still remain unanswered.

America 2000: A Framework for Understanding

Although America 2000 targets educational goals and concerns, its derivation is based on systems theory, motivated by the concerns of business and government. According to Hoy and Miskel (1991), systems theory is organic in origin, useful for describing the school as a social system. This system is comprised of a set of interdependent parts, forming an organizational unit. Behavior is determined by "bureaucratic expectations, informal norms and values, and individual needs and motives" (Hoy & Miskel, 1991, p. 409). The organization receives inputs from the external environment, combines and transforms those inputs, and returns them to the environment in the form of products or services. In the context of schools, this represents the student outcomes: adaptation, goal achievement, integration, and latency (See Figure 1). The system also processes feedback regarding the outputs from the environment.

In America 2000, business and government merged in their objectives for creating an improved product. The desire for improvement was not based on educational or pedagogical concerns. It focused on the need of business for a skilled workforce and governmental concerns for a more literate and involved citizenry. However, identified needs and solutions place the burden for accountability on the educational system.

The school functions as an open system, incorporating aspects of the environment. Business, industry, government, and public opinion are the primary factors impacting the schools. Schools are currently operating in an uncertain, turbulent environment. In this context, they operate as learning models that are continually changing, being reinvented, or modified, depending on feedback. According to Argyris and Schon (1978), if learning changes the system, the results are new rules and methods for making decisions, or

double-loop learning. It requires unlearning of the old ways and acquisition of the new ways. The difficulty for schools to incorporate this type of learning should not be underestimated. Clearly, the essence of the expectations of America 2000 requires some radical unlearning and acquisition processes, and that will take time.

Until recently, special education has functioned as a separate social system, attempting to fit into the regular education system. An important aspect of the reform effort has been an examination of the relationship between regular and special education, specifically the benefits that may be accrued by restructuring and redefining the relationship (Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Jones, 1992; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989; Peck, Donaldson, & Pezzoli, 1990; Stainback & Stainback, 1989; Will, 1986; York, Vandercook, MacDonald, Heise-Neff, & Caughey, 1992). Current trends in education are moving towards the integration of regular and special education into one social system. Regular and special educators need to work together in these reform efforts. In response to how special education can fit into America 2000, Assistant Secretary Robert Davila (1991) stated that "special education and rehabilitation should play a leadership role" (p.5), and offer models "that will improve educational outcomes for all Americans" (p. 5). According to Davila (1991), programs that have been developed for children with disabilities can be used as "models to achieve the educational goals of all children" (p. 5).

The Components of America 2000

America 2000 is a national strategy, not a federal program. It has been designed to accomplish, by the year 2000, the six national education goals which were first articulated by President Bush and the state governors at the 1989 "Education Summit" in Charlottesville, Virginia:

Goal One: All children in America will start school ready to learn.

Goal Two: The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

Goal Three: American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.

Goal Four: U. S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.

Goal Five: Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Goal Six: Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning (U. S. Department of Education, 1991)

The following thematic components of America 2000 have been operationalized within the framework of the six national goals:

1. The creation of better, more accountable, schools for today's students by improving the existing 110,000 schools
2. The establishment of a "New Generation of American Schools" through the creation of 535 new schools, one per congressional district, by 1996
3. The development of "A Nation of Students" by persuading yesterday's students and today's work force to continue the pursuit of learning

4. The identification and designation of "America 2000 Communities" that are willing to adopt the six national goals in order to develop "Communities Where Learning Can Happen" (U. S. Department of Education, 1991)

Advocacy for greater accountability on the part of the school districts; communities; and local, state, and national officials is also outlined within America 2000. Of the components involved in the accountability package, school choice and the utilization of national testing have generated widespread debate.

Choice proposes that parents be given expanded options for the education of their children, stating that it fosters competition among schools. These options include both public and private schools. Parents may receive partial tuition reimbursement for private school choice.

The evaluative purpose of national testing is to monitor the progress toward attainment of the New World Standards by means of an easily understood, quantifiable method of assessment. Implementation of this measurement is anticipated as early as 1993. The first exams would be administered in mathematics and language arts for the fourth and possibly the sixth grades. Full implementation is scheduled by 1997; however, board members are striving for an earlier date (Rothman, 1991).

Alternative teacher and principal certification routes are also suggested as a vehicle for expanding the educational workforce. Individuals seeking a career change would be able to circumvent the barriers of current certification requirements. This would allow for greater community involvement and broaden the educational spectrum of the workforce.

Problems, Issues, and Suggestions

The rhetoric of America 2000 consistently refers to "breaking the mold" of current educational policies and practices. In any innovation proposing radical change, certain forces are enacted which either restrain or drive change. A useful model for generating these forces is Lewin's force field analysis. According to Haskew (1974), " the application of Force Analysis seems to be a practical means for causing more planmaking to occur, and for modestly enlightening the planmaking decisions that are reached" (p. 68). Yates (1991) provides a useful framework, applying the technological forecasting methodology of force field analysis to understand the future for special education. Using Yates' framework as a tool for analysis, forces in the environment that are impacting the change efforts of America 2000 are as follows:

1. Demographics
   - Linguistic minorities
   - Youth and adult population shifts
   - Socioeconomic status
   - Environmental factors
     illiteracy
     crime
     substance abuse
     communicable diseases
2. Finance
   - Taxes
   - Appropriate funding for regular and special education programs

3. Personnel
   - Professional training versus alternative certification
4. Technology
   - Computers
   - Communication devices
5. Societal Values
   - Changing family structure
   - Narcissistic attitudes
   - Prejudicial issues and ethical dilemmas
   - Litigious tendencies

One of the more obvious facts about schools in America is the increasingly diverse nature of students which currently exist in the typical classroom. According to McCollum & Walker (1992), demographers have been projecting major changes in the makeup of America's urban areas by the year 2000. Minorities are expected to become majorities in most U.S. metropolitan areas. In addition, researchers have noted steady increases in the number of individuals in the public education system who have been labeled as disabled, with over four million students currently receiving special education services (Office of Special Education, 1991).

Educational reform must become more responsive to the individual needs of all students. A student who is not in the educational mainstream should not be barricaded from successful participation in school and community activities. Reyes and McCollum (1992) note that current policies for educational reform, however, do not adequately deal with culturally and linguistically diverse student populations and "conspire to make it more difficult for non-mainstreamed students to become proficient in literacy, successfully move

up the education ladder, and enter the work force" (p. 171). America 2000's policies for educational reform have followed a similar path. Authors of the national education strategy have not focused on receiving feedback from their most important informants: educators. According to Elmore and McLaughlin (1988), reforms must "originate in the practice of teaching, rather than in expert advice and external standards. . . . reforms cannot be expected to have large-scale or long-term effects unless they involve substantial dialogue among policy, administration, and practice" (p. v).

In light of the increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse and disabled students, as well as the trend towards integrating regular and special education programs into one educational system, the need for input from both regular and special education professionals for attainment of these goals intensifies. In his address to the 70th Annual Council for Exceptional Children National Convention (April 15, 1992, Baltimore, Maryland), Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander emphasized the need for special educators to "take the lead" in the reform efforts of America 2000. Two issues, choice and national testing, have been widely debated and targeted by reform advocates and skeptics. Because of the possible negative effects these two issues could have on diverse and disabled student populations, these issues should be of utmost concern in the leadership efforts of special educators.

Choice could potentially shipwreck any of the previous or current efforts of public and special educators to head towards a unified, inclusion model of education. Inclusion is an educational concept that supports the concept of equity in the educational system. This is achieved through the union of regular and special education. Policies of choice, on the other hand, would inevitably regress to an unequal, racially and economically-segregated school system. Instead of collaboration and cooperation between regular and special educators, competition and exclusionary practices would be more likely to emerge.

Designs for promoting excellence and student achievement among the elite would segregate "at risk" and special populations.

Choice could also create a two-tiered system of public education. Clinchy (1991) claims that one system would be well-funded, serving primarily white, middle class, suburban students. The other would be minimally funded, largely serving the urban poor, disabled, and minority students. The practice of segregation and separate educational programs would return. The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) addresses this notion of separate programs: "Most of the educational research suggests a lack of efficacy in a separate system. If segregation does not assist students in better meeting their educational outcomes, then why promote such a system?" (CASE, 1993, p. 9). A better alternative for school restructuring would be for school districts and community agencies to employ a unified, full inclusion model.

A full inclusion model (see Figure 2) allows all students to receive the educational services they need without labeling them or removing them from the classroom environment (CASE, 1993). Students with severe disabilities and low incidence disabilities are integrated into general education classrooms for their educational programs. As an alternative to pull-out programs, students with mild and moderate disabilities are kept in the regular classroom (Sailor, 1991). Components of the full inclusion model (Sailor, 1991) result in the following advantages: 1) self-contained special education classes, separated from the mainstream activities of the regular school program, are minimized and replaced by age and grade-appropriate regular education placements; 2) instructional methods promote cooperation between students through peer tutoring; 3) special education teachers act as support personnel in the regular classroom and provide a greater variety of instructional alternatives; and 4) individual student needs are more adequately met by

teacher and student interactions; and 5) a shared educational agenda and support system exists at the local school site.

The success of a unified, inclusive school program depends heavily on the attitudes and beliefs of every educator within the school and school district. The Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) most succinctly summarize the requirements for inclusion to work and its subsequent benefits:

> For a unified system to be successful, all educators must believe that *all* students can learn and that they, as educators, are capable of teaching *all* students. . . . The most important implication is for students. No longer are students with special needs relegated to the status of second class citizens. *All* students share a common environment and *all* belong. Students learn through everyday experience to accept and hopefully value differences in others. The sooner students become immersed in this type of system, the quicker problems of a dual system will be eliminated (CASE, 1993, pp. 9, 10).

Local leadership must examine their present position and develop "a vision of effective schools for all students, especially those with diverse learning needs" (CASE, 1993, p. 3). To determine how student outcomes can be met for every student, negotiations among school faculty, principals, and the local community will be needed. Staff development on how to work collaboratively and share professional expertise should be implemented (CASE, 1993). Every opportunity and resource should be provided so that an ongoing, maximal,cooperative effort among all parties can exist.

When cooperation and agreement between special and regular educators exist, a unified system of education can be achieved. West and Idol (1990) use the term, "collaborative consultation", describing it as "a professional problem-solving process" (p. 22) and "service delivery option for educating mildly handicapped and at-risk students" (p.22). According to West and Idol (1990), its major purposes are to prevent or remediate problems in student learning and behavior, and to coordinate instructional programs through collaborative planning and collegial relationships. Collaborative consultation should accompany the unified, inclusion model as a preventative measure, aimed at

identifying learning and behavior problems prior to referral for special education. Creative solutions can be generated, utilizing the diverse expertise of all educational professionals and simultaneously promoting shared ownership (West & Idol, 1990). A unified, inclusion model would provide a systematic tool for professionals, parents, and communities to strive together toward the goals envisioned in America 2000.

Accountability mechanisms, suggested by the proposed national testing programs of America 2000, raise further questions and concerns for the special needs student. Quantifiable assessments, which measure whether the national goals are being met by each state and local district, enlarge and reinforce the existent "system of endless and arbitrary standardized achievement testing that already begins even before kindergarten" (Clinchy, 1991, p. 213). America 2000 suggests that colleges, universities, and employers use test results as selection criteria. The possible resurrection of segregation, labeling, and tracking of students can be forecasted, just when educators are beginning to recognize the benefits of inclusion.

Well-specified performance standards and goals are absolutely necessary for improvement to occur; however, flexibility and consideration for individual needs and diversity must be built into the strategy to guarantee success for everyone. Tests need to be administered using appropriate cultural and linguistic modifications to eliminate bias. It is crucial that all assessments be administered in the student's native language and placement decisions should not be based solely on standardized test scores. Rather, observations made during administration of any test (criterion and norm-referenced measures) should be compared to developmental norms and reported accordingly. Standardized test scores should only be reported when no test modifications have been made, and the student's characteristics correlate to the norming sample.

Furthermore, the focus should be on student outcomes, not test scores. General expectations for what students should be learning should be applicable to all students. Demonstration of mastery should allow for differentiation among students, and reflect "the diversity of the educational goals of students who receive special education services" (McLaughlin & Warren, as cited in CASE, 1993). The emphasis should be based on student progress, not "absolute standards of performance" (CASE, 1993).

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) can be used as a vehicle for tailoring each student's program of study to the attainment of specific student outcomes. The student's individual outcomes can be correlated to the school's outcomes. The IEP is a specific educational program, designed for the individual student, and is related to the educational needs of the child. Goals of the IEP must include input from the child's parent or guardian, regular and special education personnel, a representative of the local education agency, and, where appropriate, the child. It includes information concerning the student's current level of performance; provides annual goals and short range objectives for meeting those goals; specifies special and related services relevant to the student's needs, the dates those services must be provided, and the extent the child will participate in regular educational activities; and stipulates what criteria will be used to evaluate the student's program. Instead of using the IEP as a service or procedure-oriented mechanism, the IEP can be used to measure the student's progress toward specific outcomes (CASE, 1993).

The natural outcome of a national test would be the creation of a national curriculum. A narrowly-defined curriculum, based on specific skills, would eventually lead to the unequal practice of grouping students by academic ability. Once again, teachers would be grappling with what should be taught rather than implementing innovative curriculum. "Teaching-to-the-test" methods would negate instructional techniques that foster higher-order thinking skills for all students. Compartmentalized curriculum, taught

in the conventional mode of the traditional school, would stifle strides achieved in the creative classroom. Student outcomes would be reduced to standardized results, eliminating tolerance for diverse learners. Teachers could potentially lose their sense of professionalism in the classroom, seeking only to meet the demands of testing and curricular programs. Professional judgment and reason would be overlooked, and regression to rule enforcement would result in a paper trail of accountability justifications.

Effective schools literature for at-risk and disabled students, however, advocates learning-by-doing and integrated classroom arrangements. The advent of technology furnishes alternative approaches to augment the curriculum (Ornstein, 1991). Video/audio technology should be integrated to maximize multisensory and individual learning styles. Diversity is not something to be avoided; its essence must be celebrated in the classroom through the student population as well as curricular methods and content. In addition, a multicultural component, emphasizing cross-cultural competencies and awareness, should be woven throughout the curriculum, recognizing the status of culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

Rather than imposing "World Class Standards" in the five core subject areas on all students, measurable standards relevant to post-school endeavors are suggested. Selection of specific standards should be contingent upon the chosen academic and vocational goals of each individual. This would fully encompass the America 2000 plan for lifelong learning, responsible citizenry, and productive employment without jeopardizing the opportunities for those interested in advanced academic learning.

As an alternative to academic endeavors, a vocationally-oriented curriculum is recommended for students less likely to succeed on an academic track. In a report to the President and the Congress of the United States (1989), transition planning for students with disabilities was reported as most effective when emphasis in the schools was placed

on developing skills needed to function in the community or postsecondary programs. Students enrolled in a comprehensive vocational training program during high school were also more likely to secure employment following graduation. Businesses within the community should cultivate a partnership with schools, designed to provide functional, experiential learning (Chadsey-Rusch, Rusch, & O'Reilly, 1991). Parental involvement should be encouraged by schools, creating a collaborative planning effort through the Individual Transition Plan (ITP) for students with disabilities.

The ITP serves the critical function of moving students with disabilities from school activity to work and community living. According to Sailor, Anderson, Halvorsen, Doering, Filler, and Goetz (1989), "this is the time to begin to survey the immediate community in which the young adult will live and identify the likely options for competitive supported employment, recreation, community resources, and place of residence" (p. 158). ITP planning requires coordination between various educational, community, and business agencies.

School reform efforts have minimally addressed the issues of meeting individual needs and the delivery of special education services to the disabled (Lilly, 1987; Pugach & Sapon-Shevin, 1987; Sapon-Shevin, 1987; Shepard, 1987). The underlying assumption of most of the national reports on education and previous reform efforts is that special education, as a separate system, will address the needs of the disabled. Failure to combine regular and special education in educational reform efforts was addressed by Pugach and Sapon-Shevin (1987):

> Failing to clarify the interface between general and special education means that any reform that does occur as a result of the excellence reports has the potential either to bypass entirely the special education system as it now operates or, worse yet, to destroy some of the tenuous progress that has been made in special education to date (p. 299).

Fortunately, special education and regular education professionals in public education are beginning to realize that they both have a responsibility to students with disabilities. Schools are beginning to respond to this realization through instructional and institutional modifications (CASE, 1993). Unless the needs of special and diverse student populations are considered, however, it appears that the six national goals may have the potential of fulfilling Pugach and Sapon-Shevin's (1987) prediction. The purpose of the next section is to examine the six national goals, their implications for special education, and make recommendations relevant to the needs of all individuals.

The National Goals and Implications for Special Education

The six national goals project a cooperative vision of education in America by the year 2000. When considering the increasing diversity of student and adult populations as well as those served by special education, the goals appear seasoned with idealism, but lack the substance of practicality. According to Watson (1991), "What's good in America 2000 may be enough to get the train going. A few bells will ring and a whistle may blow; but the steam won't carry it far" (p. 48).

Goal One: By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.

In an analysis of the six national goals, Ysseldyke, Algozzine, and Thurlow (1992a) note that this goal most directly acknowledges the needs of children with disabilities and uses the term, "disabled". The need for "early childhood experiences, early preventative measures, and parent involvement" (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 1992a) is also recognized. Early identification and intervention issues, particularly for the disabled child, however, are not addressed.

School readiness encompasses more than the attainment of a minimum score on a battery of age-appropriate tests. The objective of school readiness programs should be to intervene for every child with a developmental disability from birth. Research of child development indicates that children mature at different rates. Families need to be directly involved in the child's early intervention program. Through education and training, families can learn specific intervention strategies that will help the child "catch up". Despite developmental delays, these children would be more prepared and ready to learn when they enter the educational system. Since "the ultimate goal of family support programs is to enable families to be independent by developing their own informal support networks" (Bailey, Buysee, Edmondson, & Smith, 1992), early intervention is essential. Both parents and educators must share the responsibility for school readiness.

Health and nutrition concerns contribute to low motivation and low school achievement. Mothers who are chemically dependent often produce youngsters who have developmental delays, neurological deficits and/or behavioral disorders. More emphasis must be placed on intervention programs to prevent chemical dependency and implement preventative prenatal care.

Parent and child education must begin at birth. The following components need to be addressed in the definition of readiness to enable educators to assist parents in this process:

- Provision of more experiential learning, utilizing a holistic approach
- Initial communication skills
- Awareness of self and environment
- Coordination and mobility
- Immunizations

- Medical, dental, vision, and hearing screening prior to school entry, with periodic updates
- Precursory literacy skills
- Experiential exposure to the following:
  - Activities of daily living in home and school
  - Culturally-appropriate activities
  - Community involvement activities

Parents also need the ability to assist their children in the learning process and utilize existing programs. This includes the acquisition of advocacy skills. Knowledge and access to community-based programs, school policies and procedures, and public/school transportation networks will empower parents. In order to ensure full and on-going participation in the educational process, education regarding the stages of child development and language facilitation techniques should also be provided. By educating both the child and the parent, readiness will be enhanced.

Goal Two: By the year 2000, the high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

Business demands are requiring graduates to demonstrate adequate levels of skills, training and education. The goal implies that receiving a high school diploma is an endorsement of preparation for the job market. This is not necessarily an adequate conclusion.

In calculating graduation rates, high school dropouts and incarcerated youth who are awarded a General Education Degree (GED) are not currently included (Phi Delta

Kappa, 1990). America 2000's goal for increasing the high school graduation rate may be realistic for the regular education student. Nevertheless, it remains inappropriate for the special education population whose IEP's often enable them to graduate with mastery of 70% or less of the conventional requirements.

Rather than focusing on percentages and test scores for accountability measures, an outcomes-oriented model of education could be used. Accountability would be associated with whether every student made progress toward pre-established goals and objectives (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Shriner, 1992b). Specific to the needs of all students, Ysseldyke, Thurlow, and Shriner (1992b) suggest that the model include enabling outcomes and educational outcomes. Enabling outcomes, in some cases, would precede educational outcomes. These outcomes would be related to prerequisite skills that must be developed before the student can fully participate in the educational experience. Each outcome would be broken down into specific competencies and mastery outcomes. Furthermore, measuring the student's progress toward achieving the outcomes would be "conducted in real-life situations, rather than through tests that do not reflect the real-life outcome goals" (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, and Shriner, 1992b, p.38). The selection of desired student outcomes could be closely correlated to the student's IEP.

While dropout rates for African-Americans and Euro-Americans have declined within the last 20 years, the Hispanic-American dropout rate remains virtually unchanged. Furthermore, both African-American and Hispanic-American students are over-represented in special education (Harry, 1992). Inappropriate placement of these two minority groups in special education usually occurs due to the lack of culturally- appropriate assessment procedures. Inappropriate placement influences student, teacher, and parent expectations. These lowered expectations potentially contribute to the already existing dropout rate.

The minority dropout rate should be of concern to educators and administrators as well. "Principals need to be sensitized to the seriousness of ignoring overt displays of racial prejudice and its effects on all persons in the school" (Reyes & Capper, 1991). Without IEP goals which address daily living skills, vocational training, and steps to decrease the over- representation of minorities in special education, an accurate measurement of the nation's dropout rates will be impossible. The following modifications would reduce the current dropout rates:

- Implementation of functional IEP goals with emphasis on student outcomes
- Appropriate assessment and identification of special needs students
- Training and staff development to increase the sensitivity of public school administrators and teachers toward culturally diverse and special education populations
- Increased parental involvement and expectations
- Provision of models of successful minority and disabled individuals
- Implementation of mentor programs and vocational placements within colleges and neighborhood businesses for special education and minority students
- Recognition of successful special education and minority students
- Counseling and career services for disabled and minority students, including crisis intervention

Goal Three: By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.

This goal encompasses a wide spectrum of subject matter, student activities, and intellectual skills. A universal definition of challenging subject matter does not accommodate for individual differences. Such a definition should include both functional and academic skills. Appropriate assessment strategies and adequate curriculum must be developed for all students. Modification of assessment instruments must be modified so that they measure functional as well as academic skills.

A broad, practical definition for responsible citizenship should span all populations and include community involvement, socially-appropriate behavior, and civic responsibility. For all students to accomplish the goal for "responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment", an inclusive school environment, where students with disabilities are interacting with students without disabilities, is imperative (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 1992a). Further learning should include any post-secondary training and education. Vocational skills should be updated throughout the rehabilitation process. Successful transition programs are crucial for facilitating productive employment, independent living, and university/college attendance for all populations.

Goal Four: By the year 2000, U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.

Arguments rage over comparing United States students with students from other countries. The American education system is not as competitive as its counterparts throughout the world. Altbach (1992) notes that American students always have a second chance. Doing poorly on a test at a young age does not impose serious lifelong consequences. Virtually anyone can go to college, and everyone is entitled to a free and

appropriate public education. If countries are to be compared, "Each country's sample ought to reflect its entire population" (Rotberg, 1990).

Critics agree that U.S. math and science scores must be improved to remain competitive in a global economy. However, there is little agreement on who to test, what test to use, and how to measure progress. Special population students are often exempted from criterion and norm-referenced tests. Even if they are included, the comparative results of other nations with limited educational options would remain the same.

It is important to provide every student with meaningful opportunities to explore basic math and science concepts. Further development would be facilitated by inclusion in science lab activities. An extension of math and science activities beyond the classroom to the community and home settings would foster hands-on, practical learning experiences.

In terms of the long-term effects of school restructuring on individual students, McCollum and Walker (1992) state that "a true pursuit of excellence might better be served by a focus on the need for more specialized and careful attention to the needs of *all* students, rather than a focus on the race for us to be "Number 1." (p. 192). Emphasis on the attitude of being first should shift to enabling all students to realize their potential. We need to remember that we are dealing with human lives, not just statistics.

Goal Five: By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

The U. S. Department of Education estimated that between 17 and 21 million Americans failed to reach its standard for literacy in 1982. This literacy standard was based on eighth grade proficiency. In reality, this data indicates that more than 90% of the U. S.

population is literate (Phi Delta Kappa, 1990). However, the National Assessment of Educational Progress reported the results of the most recent literacy tests that were administered to young adults between the ages of 21 and 25. Among those respondents that had a two-year degree or better, more than half had difficulty locating information in a typical news article. Furthermore, only about 20% lacked the ability to utilize written expression to convey information they read. Comparably low scores were also noted on tasks such as determining correct change, identifying employee benefits, making out checks, and following directions on maps (Mikulecky, 1990). Clearly, these findings reveal that adult literacy should be a common concern for all.

According to Phi Delta Kappa (1990),

> Experts on literacy have their own working definitions, but employers seem more likely to favor a definition that is directly tied to performance on the job. Some observers contend that even higher levels of worker knowledge and skills will be required if America is to compete effectively in the world economy (p. 19).

The need for successful transition from school to work, a goal that is often addressed in the student's ITP, is implicit in this goal. Unfortunately, most of the jobs that are mentioned in the discussion of this goal refer to those jobs that require more than a high school diploma. Programs that improve literacy and access to a college education are emphasized, without considering alternative career paths for youth with disabilities who may not be able to enroll in postsecondary education programs (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 1992a). Some youths with disabilities may not enroll in a postsecondary educational program. Therefore, a definition of literacy that considers multiple postschool outcomes is needed.

Literacy should be redefined to include all students regardless of age, educational level or placement, and level of cognitive functioning. While it would be wonderful for "every adult American to be literate", we must examine the validity of this goal whenever special education populations are included. The goal, in its present form, does not

recognize individual differences. This recognition is vital in order to achieve academic excellence in the delivery of educational services.

It is not realistic to expect to encompass all individuals (i.e., "every adult American") within a single definition. Categorical definitions that consider every individual and level of educational achievement should be drafted. Specific knowledge and skills that are necessary to compete in a global economy should accommodate the abilities of all students. The definition should address performance of functional tasks, retention of newly-learned materials, and the rate at which new learning occurs. Again, the focus should be on individual student outcomes. Consideration of each individual's role in society and the workplace should not discriminate against those functioning with lower cognitive levels. In this way, the definition of literacy can be all-inclusive, promoting both excellence and equity in education.

Because disabilities not only exist among Euro-Americans and mono-lingual populations, literacy skills must also be provided in other languages besides English. A category that includes bilingual knowledge and literacy skills should also be incorporated. Furthermore, in order to adequately "compete in a global economy", awareness and respect for varying cultures should be included in the curriculum. According to Cole (1991), the United States will become more pluralistic:

> The nation is no longer the great melting pot where people reject their cultural past in an effort to assimilate. Minority groups continue to embrace their culture, their heritage, and their language and they have diverse physical, social, and economic characteristics. These are inevitable, unavoidable, and nonnegotiable facts (p. 1).

The increasing diversity of students calls for greater flexibility and attention to these differences in educational reform and policy-making. Research on best practices for educating students from diverse backgrounds should not be ignored. Rather than siding

with "partisan agendas", current policies for reform should "provide educators with latitude to exercise choice in dealing with the diversity before us" (Reyes & McCollum, 1992).

Goal Six: By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

No American would dispute the merits of this goal with crime and violence on the rise. National campaigns have been launched to promote public school safety and the elimination of drugs from schools. While these efforts are backed by good intentions, they fail to consider special education populations such as socially-maladjusted students and emotionally-disturbed children who may not be able to control an addiction or violent outbursts. How should these situations be handled?

Special considerations for certain special education populations that exhibit violent behaviors or suffer drug addiction that are directly related to the disorder are needed. When handling discipline, suspension and expulsion of disabled students, schools should consider whether the behavior threatens the safety of others in the school and is a manifestation of the disability. Due to the inclusive context of "every school", the appropriateness of the student's current placement should be reexamined.

Educators should remember that the purpose of discipline is to teach both regular and special education students their responsibilities to adhere to the rules of school and society. IEP goals should include behavioral objectives and clearly stated performance outcomes for students with varying levels of comprehension and functioning. The consequences of breaking the rules should also be taught. Sheltering special education students from disciplinary sanctions shelters them from the realities of life (Yell, 1989). The procedural safeguards of Public Law 94-142 and the Individuals with Disabilities Act

(IDEA) should serve as a guide for disciplinary decision-making. Because of the changing structure of schools and potential changes in the delivery of education services to students with disabilities, administrators should make sure that they, as well as their staff, understand the law regarding suspension and expulsion of all students (Valesky & Hirth, 1992). Administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members should develop a team approach to working with all students and their need for behavioral modifications. Without such a commitment to collaborative school and community efforts, attainment of a "disciplined environment conducive to learning" will not be realized.

Conclusion

America 2000 proposes a strategy of promise and hope for our nation to join forces within each community, collaboratively striving towards the attainment of mutual goals. It articulates a national belief in the educational system as the elixir for the dysfunctions of society, youth, and the nation's global and competitive future. Before change can occur, however, societal and political viewpoints of special populations and their needs must sincerely shift from an exclusionary model to an inclusionary one, not just provide lip-service to an ideal. Using an interpretivist perspective, an analysis of the social translation of disability asks how the term, disability,

> is used by those who apply the label to others. . . .interpretivist perspective teaches us that the social construction of disability, in this case, is more than just the social rule. It is also the actions of applying the rule. The definition is important only in the context of who is using it, and upon whom it is being used (Ferguson, Ferguson, & Taylor, 1992, p. 296).

Recent legislation including IDEA, its amendments, and the Americans with Disabilities Act parallels this perspective, providing procedural safeguards and provisions against discriminatory practice. Legislation and governmental mandates have historically been tested by litigation and a "wait-and-see" mentality. Before negative forces have the

opportunity to tip the balance of equity caused by previous special education efforts; we, as special educators, must visibly and audibly make known our positions and suggestions for improvements regarding the six national goals. The suggestions mentioned in this paper are merely the beginning. Only through a a unified commitment to advocacy for individuals with disabilities can it be ensured that America 2000 will include every individual within its vision and purpose.

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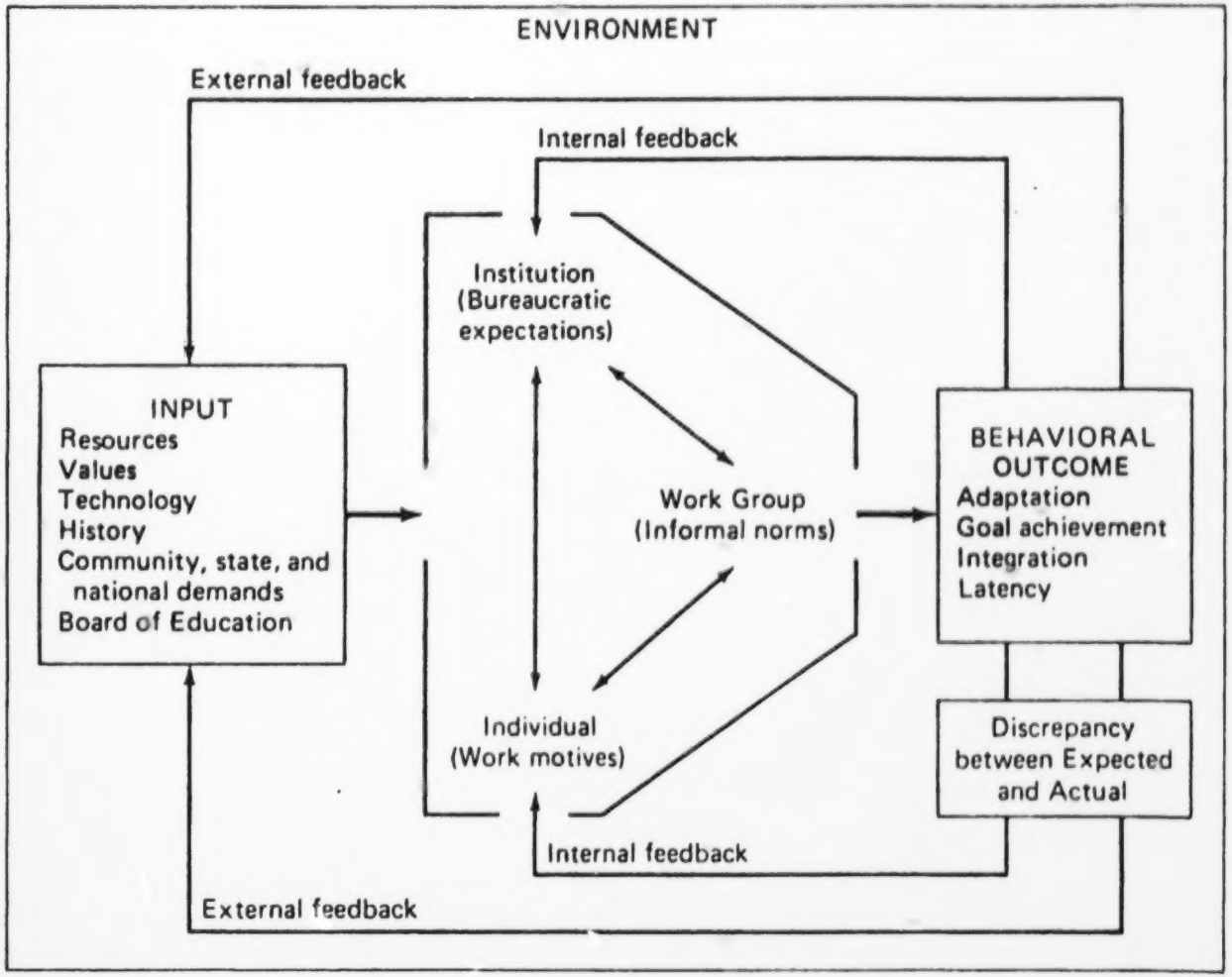

Figure 1. A social systems model for schools. (From Hoy & Miskel, 1991.)

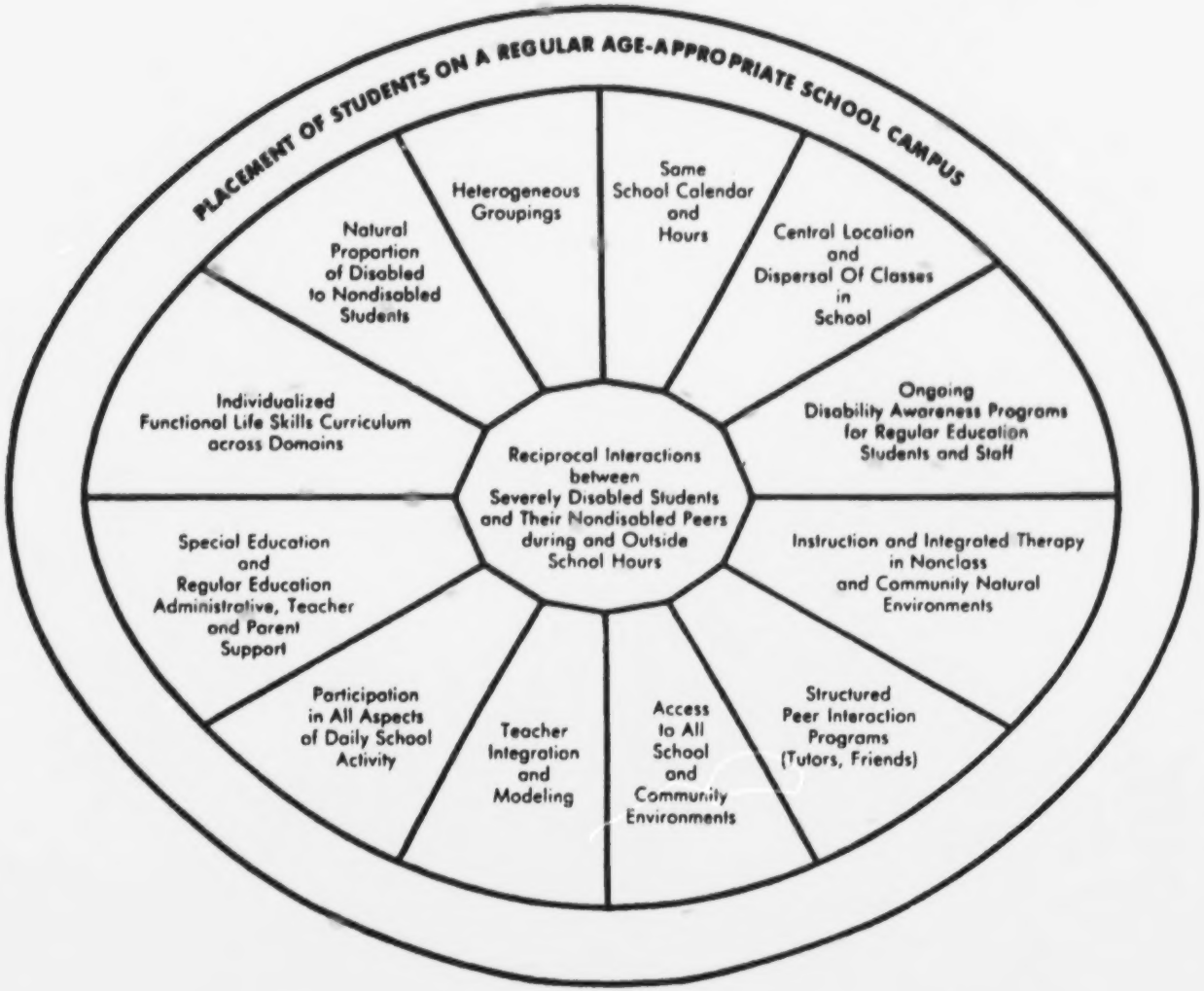
PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS ON A REGULAR AGE-APPROPRIATE SCHOOL CAMPUS
Heterogeneous Groupings
Same School Calendar and Hours
Central Location and Dispersal Of Classes in School
Ongoing Disability Awareness Programs for Regular Education Students and Staff
Instruction and Integrated Therapy in Nonclass and Community Natural Environments
Structured Peer Interaction Programs (Tutors, Friends)
Access to All School and Community Environments
Teacher Integration and Modeling
Participation in All Aspects of Daily School Activity
Special Education and Regular Education Administrative, Teacher and Parent Support
Individualized Functional Life Skills Curriculum across Domains
Natural Proportion of Disabled to Nondisabled Students
Reciprocal Interactions between Severely Disabled Students and Their Nondisabled Peers during and Outside School Hours

Figure 2. A model for inclusion. (From Sailor, Anderson, Halvorsen, Doering, Filler, & Goetz, 1989.)